velopment have been sanctioned durng the financial year 1993-94 to 1998-99 (upto 30.11.98) and the position of disbursement of loan to each factory is at Annexure.

[*See Appendix* 185, *Annexure No.* 56]

(c) The factorywise outstanding SDF dues (as on 30.6.98) is given at Annexure.

[*See Appendix* 185, *Annexure No.* 57]

(d) No such case has come to the notice of the Government.

Effect of Pest-Infected Australian Wheat on Other Agricultural Crops

2208. SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minsiter of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the pest-infected imported Australian wheat stocks are posing a hazard to other agricultural crops like cashewnut etc. in Karnataka, as reported in Hindustan Times of 12th October, 1998;

(b) if so, what steps have been taken so that domestic agricultural crops do not suffer any hazard; and

(c) who is responsible for this state of affairs and what action is proposed to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYA PAL SINGH YADAV): (a) to (c) No Sir. Imported Australian wheat stocks have been received at various Indian Ports in pest-free condition. A complaint received from Karnataka about cross-infestation of cashewnut stored in the Karnataka State Warehousing Corproaiton Godowns at Mangalore was investigated by FCI and it was found that there was not threat of insect infestation. As a measure of precaution the authoritics of FCI and State Warehousing Corporaiton have been advised to keep the imported wheat stock free from infestation by regular prophylactic and curative treatment and to issue the stock on priority.

Meeting of Chief Secretaries on Price Rise

2209. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE:

Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Cabinet Secretary took a meeting of all the State Chief Secretaries on the question of price rise of essential commodities:

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether is a fact that the Cabinet Secretary had stated that it was due to a section of hoarders and because of lack of proper coordination between different Minsitries and agencies of the Government of India, as reported in a section of the press; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYA PAL SINGH YADAV): (a) and (b) Cabinet secretary had convened a meeting of Chief Secretaries of all States/Union Territories on 7.11.98 to discuss issues relating to price rise. Summary of the conclusion arrived in the meeting is given in Statement. (*See* below)

(c) The statement attributed to the Cabinet Secretary in not true.

(d) Does not arise.

Statement

Meeting of Chief Secretaries of States/UTs taken by the cabinet Secretary on 7.11.98 at New Delhi.

In pursuance of a decision taken recently by the Prime Minister in a meeting with the Group of Ministers, the Cabinet Secretary today held a meeting with the Chief Secretaries of State Governments and Union Territories to reivew the situation arising out of the recent increase in the prices of some essential commodities. The meeting took not of the abnormal increase in the prices

and discussed measures, both short tern and otherwise, to bring down prices anc to avoid a recurrence of the problem. After a detailed review of the situation. the meeting reach the following conclusion:—

(1) In the light of the damage caused to seedlings for the late khri crop of onions, it was felt that the ban on their export, which currently is vailed till 30th November, 1998, may be extended till the 31st January 1999.

(2) Restrications on the movemen of essential commodities including informal restrictions need to be lifted in the interest of their three flow throughout the country.

(3) Strigent action should be taken against boarders and black marketeers under the provisions of the Essential Commodities Act and the Prevention of Blackmarketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act. It was noted that necessary powers in this regard already stand delegated to the State Governments and Union Territories and they should invoke these powers whenever warranted.

(4) Market intervention operations should be undertake by the State Governments and Union Territories as last resort in a transporent manner so as to ensure that the maximum benefits are available to the vulnerable and weaker sections of the society. Where necessary, the Central Government would be prepared to consider grant of financial assistance for this purpose on matching basis to the State Governments.

(5) In addition to the above immediate measures, the meeting felt that action should be taken to improve the crop forecasting system so that crop production estimates are as accurate as possible. In this connection, the State Governments and Union Territories have an important role to play by way of in put for the crop forecasts. It is essential therefore that they take urgent action in this regard. A joint monitoring mechanism will be set up between the Central and State Governments to make real time assessment of surpluses and deficiates and to plan in respect thereof. Towards this, the Government will set up a National Forecasting Centre for Agricultural Products.

(6) Decisions on import to cover the anticipated gap between demand and supply should be taken at the stage of forecast prepared on the basis of area sown. That is to say such decision should be taken 3-4 months in advance of harvest. It was also felt that such imports should be undertaken on a centralised basis by Central Government agencies and not separately by individual State agencies.

(7) Storage facilities at present are inadequate and are not evenly distributed throughout the country. Building up of storage capacity in different parts of the country is therefore, absolutely essential and an action plan should be immediately drawn up to augment capacities in this regard. States maintaining control on cold storages should repeal their cold storage orders. In order to improve country storage technology for agricultural products, Ministry of Agriculture will set up a high level expert group to identify the necessary policy measures.

(8) Food Processing facilities also need to be strengthened in a big way. This will not only ensure that the loss presently due to wastage of vegetables etc. is avoided but also that such commodities are available processed from in times of shortage.

(9) The distribution machinery in the States and Union Territories need to be tightened so as to minimise the scope for any kind of diversion of

stocks. Alongwith this the price monitoring mechnism in the States and Union Territories need to be strengthened on a priority basis to cover the rural areas also.

(10) Additional allocations of rise, wheat and palmolein requested by some of the State Governments were agreed to.

(11) State Government have been flexibility to exempt any edible oil from the provisions of the Compulsory Packaging Order so that no undue hardship is caused to consumers.

(12) A special steady group will be set up to identify measures required to meet the needs of north-east States and Island Territories regarding the supply of essential commodities.

Impact of Sugar Import of Sugar Mills

2210. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that most of the sugar mills in the country are in the red due to heavy import of sugar at low prices and at very low rate of import duty; and

(b) whether Government plan to remedy the situation; if so, the detail thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYA PAL SINGH YADAV): (a) There are no reports that most of the sugar mills in the country have gone red due to imports. However, the two apex organisation of the industry have represented to the Government that there has been large in flow of imported sugar and a steel fall in international prices and demanding an increase in the import duty on sugar from 5% to 40%.

(b) The matter regarding increase in the import duty is under consideration of the Government.

Storage Capacity for Foodgrains

2211. SHRI SANATAN BISI: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) in how many blocks, storage capacities for upto 2000 tonnes of foodgrains are currently available;

(b) whether Government are proposing any financial package to the State Governments for setting up storage for foodgrains; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYA PAL SINGH YADAV): (a) The details of blocks having storage capacity upto 2000 tonnes of foodgrains are not maintained by the Central Government.

(b) and (c) Since 1983-84 the Government of India have been operating a centrally sponsored scheme for construction of godowns of upto 2000 tonnes of capcity for storage of commodities supplied under the Public Distribution System (PDS). Financial Assistance is given to the States/Union Territories under the scheme in form of grant-in-aid and loan to meet the cost of construction of the godwons. Till 1991-92 the pattern of funding was 75% loan and 25% grant-in-aid. Since 1992-93 the pattern of funding is 50% loan and 50% grant-in-aid. Initially the scheme was restricted to the North-Eastern States, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir Sikkim and Adnaman & Nicobar Islands. In 1992, the scheme was extended to the blocks identified under the Revamped Public Distribtuion System (RPDS) in the entire country. It has been decided in the current financial year to extend the scheme to all such areas in the country where the need for such facilities exists. The total amount of financial assistance released under the scheme since its inception in 1983-84 till 15.12.1998 is Rs. 52.18 crore for construction of 522 godowns having total capacity of 2,51,042 tonnes.